



Compass Points

New Directions for English Language Training

October/November 2006

Celebrating 200 Cycles of WorkStyles: 1985 - 2006

ELT and ORR

Burna Dunn, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

The English Language Technical Assistance Project has begun a new Cooperative Agreement with the Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide technical assistance services for programs teaching English to Refugees. Through our agreement we can provide training and consultations with you on issues your programs encounter in providing the best possible services to refugees. We do training and consultations in the areas of ESL strategies and techniques, ESL pre-employability training programs (called WorkStyles®, the topic of this newsletter), integration of ESL with other refugee services, health and mental health considerations for classroom teachers working with refugees, how to set up worksite English language training programs, working with students with limited literacy or schooling, and other topics as requested by service providers. We look forward to working with many of you in this new funding cycle. Thank you for all you do to empower refugees.

Message from Spring's CEO

Myrna Ann Adkins, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

What is your work style? Have you ever had to modify some of your work habits in order to fit into the culture of a new work place? When you started a new job, was there a new language you had to learn in terms of abbreviations, acronyms, or references to historical happenings at the workplace that didn't mean anything to you, even though people spoke your native language? How did you learn the unspoken "rules," build relationships with your co-workers and figure out how to be successful in the work environment? Workstyles has been offered to amazing people from 53 countries in 200 cycles of the program.

We greatly appreciate the support and collaboration of the people who have made this program possible through funding and partnerships in sending students, helping make sure we were meeting the needs, coming to graduation ceremonies and being available to work together in the service of the program participants.

What is WorkStyles®?

WorkStyles is a pre-employment competency-based training for individuals with limited English Language skills. It is designed to provide the opportunity for people to learn skills for getting and keeping a job in the United States in a supportive and challenging environment. The usual format is a two-week, 60-hour intensive course.

Small group discussions, brainstorming, case studies, role plays, lectures, and videotaped exercises are all utilized in the training. While the content includes developing resumes, completing applications, and interviewing for a job, the course is actually about building confidence and self-esteem.

WorkStyles allows people to meet and overcome major obstacles -- they are "empowered" -- as they become proficient at dealing with other more manageable barriers and gain confidence in their ability to do that. Participants are encouraged to take small risks, to do all that they can do in each of the course content areas. Class members develop skills to meet the challenges of the American employment culture and to gain some measure of control over their lives.

WorkStyles Beginnings

Barbara Sample, Spring Institute, Denver, CO

WorkStyles #1 was held in February 1985 with participants from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The history of WorkStyles goes back to 1984 though. Myrna Ann, Bob Sample, and I met with Charles Ray, a colleague and later a Spring Institute Board member, over lunch at the Three Sons, an Italian restaurant near the original Spring Institute at 50th and Lowell in Denver. Charles, a community mental health professional, developed WorkStyles at the Lakeview Center in Florida in 1981-82 for CETA (welfare) clients. Originally designed for native English speakers, WorkStyles focused on both career and personal effectiveness skills. It was clear we would need to adapt the program for use with non-native speakers, but Charles could see the potential WorkStyles had for refugees who had some of the same challenges to their self-esteem and confidence that CETA clients had. We decided to purchase the franchise for something like \$2,000 and began offering it to refugee participants in 1985.

When we started WorkStyles in 1985, virtually all refugee clients went through the Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP). There was definitely a need for pre-employment training for refugees, but there was no system of referrals in place initially. We needed to do a bit of convincing, but the CRSP case managers agreed that we could try WorkStyles with their toughest clients, the ones they were ready to sanction for non-cooperation, refusing to take jobs, hopping from job to job, blowing it once they were on a job. That first group was tough. None of them had been successful at keeping a job, they were defensive, resistant. Underneath the tough exterior, though, people were unsure, they didn't know the cultural rules or the language for getting a job and keeping it. WorkStyles provided them both information and practice. They gained skills and in the process confidence that they could be successful at getting and keeping the next job. The transformation was quite remarkable. We were hooked.

We figure over 2,500 people have gone through the WorkStyles training since it started in 1985. WorkStyles has made a difference in a lot of people's lives. It has made a difference for the participants, but those of us who have been WorkStyles trainers realize how fortunate we are to work with such remarkable people. We have learned so much from them. We are awed by their strength and spirit. We are inspired by their gift of diversity and tolerance. And we know how lucky this country is.

Student Successes

I open a new business this week. I plan to meet one person, and I think I need your help. I will call you for details.

- Igor Pyastolov, July 2006

I have learned more about the United States and how to live here in the nine days of Workstyles than I have in 3 years of living here. I am so grateful to now feel so much better. I will begin a job next week as a day care worker. I was a nurse in Nepal.

- Suku Rai, June 2006

Adrien Mangituka, graduate of WorkStyles #190 in April, was profiled this quarter in the African Refugee Network's national newsletter (published by ECDC). The article was titled, "Congolese Refugee Becomes a 'Must Hire' for ACC Staff." It documented his life in Africa before immigrating to the US as a refugee, and then went on to describe his job at the African Community Center as the Assistant Manager of their Safari Seconds Thrift Store (a venture started with a TANF Grant to serve Level 3 clients).

Two years ago, I came to Denver. Individuals and organizations that welcomed and helped me to become self-sufficient in the United States are always in my mind. The efforts of Spring Institute and its instructors' passion for their students are great. I am grateful to the Spring Institute for your wholehearted support.

- Debello Challa, August 2006

"Every time my husband and I get new jobs, they're always better than the previous ones. We always give credit to WorkStyles for this."

- Mu Mu, a graduate of WorkStyles #183 (September 2005) who was recently hired at Lutheran Family Services as a case manager. Her husband, Win Naing (WorkStyles #178) was recently promoted to assistant manager of the warehouse for United Natural Foods, Inc.

WorkStyles Students' Countries of Origin

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Armenia
4. Azerbaijan
5. Belarus
6. Bosnia
7. Bulgaria
8. Burkina Faso
9. Burma
10. Burundi
11. Cameroon
12. Colombia
13. Congo
14. Croatia
15. Cuba
16. DRC
17. Ecuador
18. Eritrea
19. Ethiopia
20. Guatemala
21. Guinea
22. Haiti
23. Indonesia
24. Iran
25. Iraq
26. Ivory Coast
27. Kazakhstan
28. Kenya
29. Kosovo
30. Laos
31. Latvia
32. Lebanon
33. Liberia
34. Mauritania
35. Mexico
36. Morocco
37. Myanmar
38. Nepal
39. Pakistan
40. Poland
41. Russia
42. Rwanda
43. Senegal
44. Sierra Leone
45. Somalia
46. Sudan
47. Syria
48. Togo
49. Uganda
50. Ukraine
51. Uzbekistan
52. Venezuela
53. Vietnam

Trainer's Reflections and Hopes for the Future: What do you like about training in WorkStyles?"

This is a very valuable program for newcomers to the United States. It is very flexible; different people learn different things...I did not have such a program when I came to the United States. - *Krassin Gueorguiev, Lead Trainer*

With those that have had limited resources in the past, it's good to show them all the resources available here. - *David Koppers, Trainer*

Training in WorkStyles is like paying back something you have already borrowed. I went through the program and it benefited me a lot. So it's an opportunity for me to help people like me benefit as well and improve their lives. - *Yohannes Mengistu, Program Coordinator*

I get to meet people I never would have met ever in my entire life. We get to provide a service for people that is really needed. That's a fulfilling experience to welcome them into the community. - *Jillian Lettes, Trainer*

I have friends that say, 'I don't know anyone who loves their work like you do.' I see how much [the participants] have to offer our community and how grateful they are that our country has invited them to become new Americans. I love their energy. I love their ability to learn. I love it!

- *Suzanne Saenz, Lead Trainer*

WorkStyles Training of Trainers

WorkStyles is a two-week, intensive, pre-employability skills training designed for non-native English speakers, and Spring Institute frequently conducts a Training of Trainers in conjunction with WorkStyles during the first three days of the second week. The WorkStyles Training of Trainers provides an overview to the WorkStyles program, orients participants to the training manual, gives them a chance to observe the WorkStyles program in action, and offers the chance to practice some of the activities in class with our coaching. As we go through the training, we work together on ways to adapt the program to the needs of the prospective trainers. If you or your agency is interested in the WorkStyles Training of Trainers, please contact Burna L. Dunn, elt@springinstitute.org.

A Poem

by Emily Balikuddembe (a WorkStyles Student)

What can we talk about?
 We have something great to talk about.
 Spring Institute is the talk of the day.
 Where everybody feels at home in every way
 A precious gift to all refugees and asylees.
 WorkStyles classes with smiling teachers,
 From the top to the bottom everybody alike.
 Full of Love, Life, and Compassion.
 Job finding is not hard at the end of the Day.
 Unlimited knowledge is the Crown all the way.
 Long Live Spring institute, Long Live WorkStyles.

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